

Appl. No. 10/730,233

Reply to Office Action of January 25, 2005

Remarks

Applicants acknowledge receipt of the Final Office Action dated August 11, 2005 in which the Examiner rejected claims 1-6, 11, 12, 15-19 and 24 as anticipated by Simpson (US 5,649,603), rejected claims 13, 14, 25 and 26 as obvious in view of Simpson and Ng (US 6,162,171), and indicated that claims 7-10, and 20-23 would be allowable if placed in independent form.

Applicants thank the Examiner for his thorough consideration of the case. Applicants further acknowledge the interview granted by the Examiner on 24 October 2005, in which possible claim amendments were discussed. Applicants have amended the claims in accordance with that discussion and respectfully submit that the claims are now in condition for allowance.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102

To overcome the rejection of claims 1-6, 11, 12, 15-19 and 24 as anticipated by Simpson US 5,649,603, claims 1 and 15 have been amended to require that each of the pitched wheels is positioned at a different point along the length of the robot such that no two pitched wheels are at the same point along the length of the robot. This limitation does not constitute new matter, as it echoes the intended subject matter of original claim 2 and the embodiments shown in Figures 8-14.

When the pitched wheels do not share an axial location, the tool is more versatile, as some obstructions can be avoided by allowing the robot body to shift away from the affected wheel. By contrast, when all three wheels are present at a single position along the length of the robot, as taught in the references, the robot is constrained in the degree to which it can traverse obstacles in its path.

While Simpson teaches a device having sets of wheels at different locations along the tool axis, each wheel in Simpson shares its axial position with at least one (and typically two) other wheel(s) and Simpson neither teaches nor discloses a device having each wheel at a different axial position. Applicants therefore respectfully submit that claims 1 and 15 as amended and the claims that depend from them are allowable over the art of record.

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Allowable claims

Claims 7 and 20 are in condition for allowance.

Conclusion

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's thoroughness on the present application and his assistance during the Interview. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner's consider the foregoing amendments and arguments, and withdraw the rejections and allow all of the pending claims. If the Examiner has any questions or comments regarding the foregoing, he is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at (713) 238-8043.

Respectfully submitted,



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